



Disability Studies 3391F (570)
Special Topics In Disability
Fall/Winter 2025 - 2026

Instructor: Dr. Pamela Cushing
Email: pcushin@uwo.ca

Course Information

Calendar Description: Selected topics of current interest in Disability Studies. A course description will be available at time of registration.

Prerequisite(s): [Disability Studies 1010A/B](#) and [Disability Studies 2201F/G](#), or permission of the Instructor.

Antirequisite(s):

Extra Information: 3 lecture hours.

Course Weight: 0.5

Breadth: Category A

Subject Code: DISABST

Notice: Unless you have either the requisites for this course, or special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.



3391G (570)
Leadership and Intellectual Disability
Fall/Winter 2025-2026

Professor: P. Cushing, PhD
Email: pcushin@uwo.ca

Course Information Calendar

Description:

In this course, students use the Individual and Social models of disability to explore a range of themes and approaches to leadership customized for people with lived experience of intellectual and developmental disabilities. Disabled people are increasingly being invited to undertake leadership opportunities of various sorts, so we study what will set them up for success in these roles; this includes both how to build up their voice and skills, as well as changing the environmental and interpersonal conditions in which they are asked to lead. We study research and best practices in light of a Disability Studies lens.

Anti-requisite(s): n/a

Prerequisite(s): DS1010A/B

Extra Information: 3 lecture hours, 0.5 course (King's).

Prerequisite(s): Disability Studies 1010A/B

Antirequisite(s): n/a (or former ds3391)

Extra Information: 3 lecture hours

Course Weight: 0.50 **Breadth:**

Category A **Subject Code:**

DISABST

Notice: Unless you have either the requisites for this course, or special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Leadership and Intellectual Disability
DS 3391F (570) ~ Fall 2025

Professor Pamela Cushing, PhD Cultural Anthropology	pcushin@uwo.ca (no 'g')
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The way society imagines disability is constantly evolving. I aim to expose students to unconventional, new frameworks and cases to broaden your imaginative capacity for fresh understandings of disability, access and ableism. In keeping with the DS Social Model, the course is about how do we build capacity in disabled individuals but also, importantly, in our environments (staff approach, attitudes, assumptions, policies) to make more space for the voice and leadership of people with lived experience of Intellectual Disability.

Course Delivery:

This is an In-Person senior seminar essay class. There is some online content on OWL including videos, readings, and other media to compliment the seminars. Students also need microphone & webcam to participate in zoom discussions/ podcasts as required.

Required Texts:

All required readings are available from the libraries or owl website. (No textbook to buy)

Course Assessments and Schedule:

ITEM (details on OWL)	% Grade	Due
Attendance	6	Ongoing
Participation (open & class exercises)	14	Ongoing
2 Readings Conversions	[25 total]	
part A Summary for 2 Readings	5	Week 3
part B: DS Analysis for 2 Readings	10	Week 4
part C: Accessible Tool creation for 2 readings	10	Week 5
part D: Share in class for participation (3%)	--	Week 5
Readings Test (mixed format)	20	Week 7
Environmental Conditions Project (Special O)	20	Week 11
Individual Adaptive tools project	15	Week 14

Course Notes: This is a senior essay course so expect 2500 words+ writing in total.

- **Collaboration:** Most assessments can be done with a partner if you wish.
- **Alternative Assessments:** Professor is open to student proposal for a distinct topic/format
- **Submissions:** All assessments must be submitted in paper copy and on OWL/Brightspace
- **Late Marks Policy:** See policies section for details on how late marks are levied.
- **Academic Integrity** (link): Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the policies, especially the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence
- **AI courses policy:** In this course, generative AI tools such as ChatGPT are permitted exclusively for items indicated in the Assessment instructions. Students must acknowledge explicitly if and how they used AI tools otherwise. Unauthorized use of AI will be subject to academic discipline.
- This course has one community site visit so you may need to take the bus or uber.

Class Schedule:

Week	Date	Theme
1	Sept 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course outline review. Course website, Philosophy, Pedagogy & office hours • Review of assignments' criteria, citations, submission & late policies. • DS key concepts refresher – including its benefits & limits for IDD • Readings Assignment: Instructions; Sign-up dates; Grading; Examples Reviewed*
2	Sept 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2:30 to 3:45: Western Quality Focus group (mandatory + food + bonus mark) • 4 to 5:30: Intellectual & Developmental Disability (IDD) background & specifics • Discussion of Leadership (define, elements, types, experiences) • Readings Assignment: Q&A (if needed; also see Discussion Forum)
3	Sept 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IDD history, changing conceptualization, prejudices and hopes • Q&A Discussion by students about Readings Asst.
4	Sept 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IDD seminar: key debates: Inclusion bias, deviance disavowal, inertia; inadequacy of charity/goodwill efforts; Contact Hypothesis (frequency & duration; accommodation) • Q&A discussion about part 3 (done) and Part 4 (due next week)
5	Oct 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Students share short summaries of their 2 Readings • Discussion of Test format & questions • IDD seminar continued
6	Oct 13	NO class ~ Thanksgiving holiday
7	Oct 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part 1: TEST on Readings in class • Part 2: Guests: L'Arche's Quest Camp Members
8	Oct 27	<p>Changing Environments I:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity: How does leadership show up in your own life? Challenges? Success factors? (think, pair, share); Review definitions/elements of leadership • Good types of leadership roles, tasks or projects • DS: What does a DS lens bring to the table here? • Purpose: Why is the organization /committee seeking IDD leadership/ involvement? • Examples of when this form of inclusion worked and flopped • Special Olympics Partner Sign-up (book meet up) & assignment instructions
9	Nov 3	Reading Week (no class)
10	Nov 10	<p>Changing Environments II:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated Co-Learning Approach to IDD & Education : Principles • What Scaffolded Support looks like (tactics, methods, worksheets) • Ex: 7 Steps of Leadership Project Training: "Luca's Story" • Videos of ICL & Leading change project

11	Nov 17	<p>Changing Environments III:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Adaptations & Accessibility: What is the organization willing to do to include or accommodate? Have they tried? What more could they do? Do they even know how? Can everyone be included as a leader in the same ways? How? <p>Ex: Boundaries Workshop: Prof. J. Shields for D.S. integrated classes Ex: PARN: What we did, philosophy, hopes, reality, outcomes, learning. Ex: SARG: What they are trying to do, barriers faced, their capacity versus typical.</p>
12	Nov 24	<p>Individual Level Adaptations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Leadership at the level of everyday life for people with IDD (including bio-factors, environment, lack of opportunities, non-recognized gestures seen as behavioural) ● Individual Skill-building – Stages, Structures, Tools ● Talking mats, wordless books, etc ● Guest: Connections Skill Building Game – G. Reid (DS & Psych Grad) ● Guest: Montage Supports Organization on skills building ● Discuss Final Assignment: Make your own tool to give the Special Olympics volunteers so that they could get to know their athletes better (desires, support needs, learning style).
13	Dec 1	<p>Changing Environments IV: No class in person: watch 2 videos on line and post 2 comments on the participation graded forum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dr. Thatcher on Transforming IDD in Medical School Curriculum, Saskatchewan ● Prof. J. Heng on book for upskilling doctors in IDD healthcare.
14	Dec 8	<p>Summation of Term Discussion</p>

Course Goals, Description and Learning Outcomes:

Goals:

In this course I create space for students to learn more about people with intellectual or developmental disability(s) (PWIDD) and how the Disability Studies lens can be useful here but requires adaptation. We explore what it means to be a leader or show leadership when you live with IDD and how to create environments or settings that encourage them to grow in this capacity. We learn about historical socio-cultural perceptions of IDD and the outcomes that were rendered in terms of isolation and exclusion in many areas of their lives. Next, we look at how these perceptions have shifted in positive ways in certain pockets and how that's resulted in more recognition that they deserve a voice, choices, and supports to help them realize their hopes. We study what is known from research and practice about tools, pedagogies and schools of thought that seem best at providing the scaffolded support they need to undertake leadership projects.

Leadership Opportunities & Questions:

Some organizations, schools, and governments have shown an interest in involving PWIDD in more of the decisions and projects that impact them. Still, the field remains undefined on: the meaning of leadership here, the kinds of roles are they best able to engage in, and how to involve a variety of disabled people, not just those with the greatest existing capacity (communication, organizational and relational skills etc). These are some of the fascinating questions that we will study and discuss. We'll also look at various examples in this nascent area regarding what organizations are doing concretely to support their involvement:

- What kind of skills do they need to get involved in a leadership role?
- How are those skills best taught? By whom?
- What is the best way to value or account for disabled people's lived experiences and insights?
- What changes should others (families, teachers, non-profits, caregivers etc) make to support them?
- How might experienced self-advocates be involved in skills-transfer training?

Grounding in DS models:

You learned in Disability Studies 1010 about how DS emphasizes the need for more "environment-fixing" and less focus on "disabled person fixing." The premise was that since society creates many of the barriers and exclusionary attitudes that disabled people face, it should also be society's responsibility to be involved in solutions for reducing those barriers. Part of how this works is for neurotypicals and allies to look for where we/they can take on some of the "burden of change" (cost, effort, adaptations) – in other words, if you or your organization want to ask PWIDD to help lead, then you must also be willing to do things that will make it possible for them to be involved and show leadership. A central concern of this course will thus be: What adaptations by others (on a team, board or committee) will enhance accessibility of material, instructions, and relationships that self-advocates need to understand in order to participate fully?

Model Cases:

This topic is relatively new and rarely addressed in the D.S. itself. As such, course materials will also expand into research from other fields and real-life examples of best practices. Some of the readings I give you are thus DS-based and others are not at all and more medical/psychological. Part of what you'll be learning about is how the DS Social model could bring new ideas into play when it comes to building on that other research. For instance, I'll teach you about a unique approach called "integrated co-learning" that the Professor developed with colleagues that blends DS, psychology, anthropology and educational theory. All cases seek to shine light on the upside potential of what intellectually disabled people can do if they are well-supported with customized teaching and environments, while also acknowledging the limits of each approach.

We'll read or hear about experiments by different organizations in how to do this, as well as some models for fully integrated learning, mutual working relationships, boundaries and leadership skill-building that were co-created by myself and 2 colleagues, along with the research and theory that underpins them. We'll hear directly from people with real life experiences including Professors, Practitioners/caregivers, and Self-

advocates (people with lived experience of IDD).

Learning Objectives

In this class, students will engage with and debate frameworks that help us to better understand intellectual disability as a socio-cultural, economic and political construct, as well as to learn about its relevance in all our lives. I consider the class a success if students learn to:

1. Recognize the inaccuracy of the common view of disability as personal tragedy, deficit or problem to fix. People are not defined by their disability, but can be shaped by it.
2. Understand the history of Intellectual Disability as a medical, psychological and education label and also a social construct with intrinsic biases and inaccuracies.
3. Understand types of leadership, what it entails and what skills people need to do it
4. Be prepared to create meaningful opportunities for learning, inclusion and connection for and with people living with developmental disability in a way that takes the condition seriously.
5. Understand how a Disability Studies lens can direct you or an organization towards making more environmental and attitudinal changes rather than only 'fixing' the disabled person.

Late assignments Penalties:

I seek to treat you as full adults in regard to assessments and deadlines – this means a)you don't owe me explanations for minor delays when 'life happens,' & also that b)you are ready to be responsible for decisions you make in those situations. As noted above, the course is designed in a way that sets you up for success by having each element marked with feedback before you move on. Think of marks penalties as incentivizing you to stay on track.

- *See the formal King's ADO policies below for instructions on how to get ADO approval for short-term illness or ACSD for accommodations help. I will of course abide by these, and you won't lose marks. Missed exams or work over 10% must follow this route.*
- *Please contact me early in the term if you have academic accommodation(s) [office hours, zoom or email] to ensure that I understand your support needs. (please not in class time)*
- *I like to support students involved in extracurriculars from sports to clubs to KUCSC – you just need a note from your coach/boss to indicate why.*
- Late marks otherwise: **minus 1 mark per calendar day** is deducted (including weekends), to a maximum of 5 days, after which I don't grade it but I can read it and give feedback. You **do not need to explain** why it's late – just submit as soon as you can. Life happens & this low marks reduction allows you to manage your workload.

Other Notes:

- ACSD Accommodation 'flexible deadlines': You must ask for a specific number of days, at least 48 hours ahead. ACSD policy allows 1 to 4 days. If you need more, or asked late, we'll loop in your ACSD counsellor or ADO to navigate to maintain your privacy
- ACSD Accommodation 'may miss classes': Your reasons are private and do not have to be shared with the professor. Simply indicate in an email that you will not attend & have ACSD. Please ensure that you set up a notes pool or partner so that you don't miss the seminar content. We must loop in an ACSD or ADO advisor however if you miss 3 classes (a senate policy maximum) to ensure you can be successful.

KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

GENERAL COURSE POLICIES

2025-2026

1. Academic Accommodations, Consideration for Absences

Academic Accommodation (Accessibility)

Accessibility Services works to ensure that academic programs are accessible to all students, and supports students who may have a condition related to, but not limited to, vision, hearing, mobility, different ways of learning, mental health, chronic illnesses, chronic pain, autism spectrum disorder, ADD/ADHD, and temporary conditions (beyond short-term academic consideration). Accessibility Services provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive assessment. The accommodation policy can be found here [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information on Accessibility Services at King's can be found [here](#).

Academic Consideration for Student Absence

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate), they should follow the procedures below.

In some cases, where instructors have built flexibility into their assessments, this flexibility will already address consideration needs.

Requests for academic consideration should be directed to the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration. Requests must be made as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration. For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate is available at https://www.kings.uwo.ca/kings/assets/File/currentStudents/courses_enrollment/exams_and_tests/SMC-Feb-2025.pdf.

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per course.

Instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring formal supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline for each course.

For further information, please see:

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

Absences from Final Examinations

If you miss the Final Exam, contact the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a "Multiple Exam Situation" (e.g., more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, or more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

If a student fails to write a scheduled Special Examination, the date of the next Special Examination (if granted) normally will be the scheduled date for the final exam the next time this course is offered. The maximum

course load for that term will be reduced by the credit of the course(s) for which the final examination has been deferred. See the Academic Calendar for details (under [Special Examinations](#)).

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and Academic Advising Office if a course requirement will be affected by a religious holiday/observance. Notice must be given as early as possible, and no later than two weeks prior to an examination, and one week prior to a midterm test date. It is the responsibility of such students to inform themselves concerning the work done in classes from which they are absent and to take appropriate action.

2. Support Services

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King's University College:
<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-services/>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King's University College:
<http://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/campus-services/student-support-services/personal-counselling/>

Good2talk is a good online and phone 24/7 resource for students and is available in English, Mandarin, and French: <https://good2talk.ca>, 1-866-925-5454

MentalHealth@Western provides a complete list of options about how to obtain help:
https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/

Academic Support Services at King's University College:
<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/academic-resources/>

GBSV Support:

King's is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at: <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safe-campus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

You can reach someone supports at Kings by emailing Care@kings.uwo.ca or calling 519-930-4640 to reach a social worker who can offer help.

You can also reach Western's Gender-Based Violence & Survivor Support Case Manager by [email](#) or by calling 519-661-3568.

Further supports can be found on this website: <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safe-campus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

See also https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html

University Students' Council offers many valuable support services for students, including the health insurance plan: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

3. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

Use of Electronic Devices: Unless explicitly stated otherwise, you are not allowed to have a cell phone, or any other electronic device, with you during tests or examinations. Unauthorized possession of such a device

during a test or examination constitutes an academic offence.

Use of Laptops, Tablets, and Smartphones in the Classroom: King's University College at Western University acknowledges the integration of new technologies and learning methods into the curriculum. The use of electronic devices such as laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones can contribute to student engagement and effective learning. At the same time, King's recognizes that instructors and students share jointly the responsibility to establish and maintain a respectful classroom environment conducive to learning.

The use of electronic devices by students during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., shall be for matters related to the course at hand only. Students found to be using electronic devices for purposes not directly related to the class may be subject to sanctions under the Student Code of Conduct; see <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-affairs/code-of-student-conduct1/>

Inappropriate use of electronics (e.g., laptops, tablets, smartphones) during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., creates a significant disruption. As a consequence, instructors may choose to limit the use of electronic devices in these settings. In addition, in order to provide a safe classroom environment, students attending in-person class sessions are strongly advised to operate laptops with batteries rather than power cords.

4. Statement on Academic Offences

King's is committed to academic integrity. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, is posted at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

It is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course instructor. Check with you instructor on what tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar-checking tools) are permitted in the course. Because a tool is permitted in one course, that does not mean it is permitted in other courses.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system; see https://elearningtoolkit.uwo.ca/tools/Originality_Reports_-_TurnItIn.html.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

5. Copyright of Course Material

Lectures and course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials are protected by copyright. Faculty members are the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials they create. Students may take notes and make copies for their own use. Students may not allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly (whether or not a fee is charged) without the express written consent of a faculty member. Unauthorized sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

Similarly, students own copyright in their own original papers and exam essays. If a faculty member wishes to post a student's answers or papers on the course website, they should ask for the student's written permission.

6. Use of Recordings

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation and/or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized recording and/or sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

7. Policy on Attendance

Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course, after due warning has been given. On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course.